

Comparing Points of View

INFORMATIONAL TEXT

FIRSTHAND ACCOUNT

- Also known as PRIMARY SOURCES.
- A description of an event told by someone who was actually there, experienced it, witnessed it, participated in it, and/or lived during it.
- These texts tell about something as it was happening.
- The person writing the text is a part of the events.



Depending on the text type:

- It may be written in first-person using *I, me, my* or second-person using *you, your, yours*.
- The author may include personal opinions, strong emotions, and descriptive anecdotes on the event— without necessarily any proof that it happened that way.
- It's typically viewed as more credible (i.e., a firsthand witness versus a secondhand researcher).

Common text types:

- Diaries, journals
- Letters, Artifacts
- Original transcripts
- Legal documents, original records
- Autobiographies

Advantages & Strengths:

- Provides a window into social, scientific, and political thoughts from a previous time period produced by people who lived during that time.
- Original material is untarnished and intact. It has not been interpreted/misinterpreted by anyone. The reader can make his own inferences.
- Can generally be tracked and attributed back to the original creator, giving greater weight to the points being referenced.

Disadvantages & Limitations:

- They may be incomplete (e.g., missing parts or pages).
- They may be unusable (e.g., illegible writing, poor quality audio recording, etc.).
- They may lack context to grasp the full extent of what is being said.
- The reader applies his own knowledge and interpretation—and it may be insufficient or inaccurate.

SECONDHAND ACCOUNT



Common text types:

- Biographies
- Encyclopedia entries
- Textbooks
- Academic journals

Advantages & Strengths:

- Written by someone who adds interpretation, explanation, context, and background about a primary source. This is valuable for the less knowledgeable reader.
- Usually includes information drawn from several sources, demonstrating it coincides with well-accepted opinions by experts on the topic.

Depending on the text type:

- Also known as SECONDARY SOURCES.
 - A description of an event told by someone who was NOT there, did NOT experience it, did NOT witness it, did NOT participate in it, and/or did NOT live during it.
 - These texts tell about something that happened in the past.
 - The person writing the text usually has read and researched a lot about the event.
- #### Depending on the text type:
- It is always written in third-person using *he, she, they, them*.
 - The author may remain reasonably neutral in their presentation of the facts (i.e., informative writing).
 - The author may argue a point or try to persuade the reader of a particular opinion supporting his claims with evidence (i.e., argumentative writing).

Disadvantages & Limitations:

- The reader is always viewing the original material through the lens of someone else's perspective, including their interpretation, experiences, and biases.
- Includes heavy doses of information (stats, dates, explanations), sometimes coming off as dry and boring to the average reader.
- Who is deemed an expert and what is accepted as truth evolves as new primary sources are discovered. The reader must carefully scrutinize *who* wrote it before blindly accepting *what* he wrote.
- Since it's not an authentic or original source, readers should consider secondary sources for explanations and interpretations of events— not evidence for them.